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WORLD SHEEP NUMBERS IN 1949 AND 1950

World sheep numbers at the beginning of 1950 are estimated at 730 million head in a preliminary report by the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations. Although the trend continued upward, the over-all gain in 1949 was relatively small and numbers were about 2 percent below the 1936-40 average. The very favorable grazing conditions during 1948 and 1949 and the continuance of high prices for wool, mutton and lamb encouraged sheep producers to expand their flocks, particularly in some of the major producing areas and in the war-devastated areas.

Sheep numbers throughout the world are likely to increase during 1950. The degree of such increase, however, will depend primarily on the continuance of the present relatively favorable grazing conditions. It is very probable that the price of wool in particular will continue high and the price of mutton and lamb may remain high in relation to prewar prices. Other factors that may have an impact on the sheep industry are the increasing population throughout most countries of the world and the increasing use of competitive or substitute products. Beyond 1950 the trend will be determined by the continuation of favorable price relationships for wool, mutton and lamb and the extent of competition from substitutes or competitive products.

SHEEP: Estimated world total, by continents, average 1936-40, annual 1949-50

Continent or area	Average 1936-40	1949 1/	1950 1/	Increase (+) or decrease (-) 1950 1936-40	1950 1949
	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Percent	Percent
North America	59,700	39,200	38,200	-36	-3
Europe	123,800	111,200	112,500	- 9	+1
Soviet Union	66,000	74,000	78,000	+18	+5
Asia	152,600	147,600	146,200	- 4	-1
South America	100,900	120,600	115,400	+14	-4
Africa	100,000	89,600	91,800	- 8	+3
Oceania	144,000	141,600	148,000	+ 3	+5
Total	747,000	723,800	730,100	- 2	+1

1/ Preliminary.

The numbers at the beginning of 1950 in most of the sheep-producing countries either had increased or were maintained near their early 1949 level. The largest numerical gains, however, were in Australia, Algeria, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, French Morocco and India, and these increases more than offset the large declines that occurred in Argentina, Uruguay and Turkey and the smaller declines in the United States, Syria, and Germany. Notwithstanding the relatively high level of world sheep numbers, such important producing countries as the United States, the United Kingdom, Argentina, China, India, Pakistan, French Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and the Union of South Africa continue to be below and in some instances considerably under their 1936-40 levels.

In the United States and Canada, sheep numbers continued to decline, but last year's decreases were the smallest since the downward trend began. More profitable alternative farm enterprises during the postwar period and shortages of labor contributed largely to the downward trend. Argentina's drop in numbers may be attributed principally to competition of the cattle industry and the recent drought. Uruguayan sheep numbers, having reached a record level in 1949, can be expected to drop due to drought and overstocking which is resulting in heavy marketings.

The trend of European sheep numbers has been upward since 1945 and current estimates are about 10 percent below the 1936-40 average. Recovery of sheep numbers in the United Kingdom, one of the larger sheep-producing countries, was curtailed by heavy losses in the winter and spring of 1946 and 1947 and the delayed return of pasture lands from wartime cultivation. Sheep raising in Europe has not been emphasized to the same extent as other livestock. Consequently, recovery in the western European countries has been somewhat slower than for hogs and cattle. Because of less dependence upon grain, the upward trend in sheep numbers in Europe is expected to continue even after hog production levels off. It is believed that the eastern and southeastern European countries have been slow in returning to prewar levels for the same reason.

Sheep numbers in the Soviet Union now are estimated to be above their prewar level. This increase is attributed to some recovery of numbers in the war-devastated areas and to acquisition from outside areas.

In Asia, sheep numbers are relatively close to their 1936-40 level. Iranian numbers declined in 1949 and are considerably below their 1936-40 average, while Iraqian numbers are above. Although numbers in Turkey are considerably above the 1936-40 level, the current estimate reflects a substantial decrease, but continues to be above the long-time average. African numbers increased during 1949, particularly in Algeria and French Morocco.

Improved pastoral conditions in Australia and New Zealand have enabled sheep producers, particularly in Australia, to expand their flocks materially. Continuing high prices for wool have been the principal inducement in Australia, while relatively high prices for mutton and lamb in the U.K.-New Zealand agreement have furnished sufficient incentive for maintaining flocks at a high level in New Zealand.

North America

Sheep numbers on farms and ranches in the United States on January 1, 1950 were reported at 30,797,000 head, a decline of 3 percent from a year earlier. This is the eighth consecutive year that numbers have declined, but this year's decrease was the smallest. Present numbers are about 45 percent below the January 1942 peak of 56,213,000 head and the lowest since 1867. The smaller decline in January 1 numbers and a 3 percent increase in the number of ewe lambs held for breeding over last year may be an indication that the downward trend is leveling off. Other farm enterprises apparently continue to be more profitable than the sheep industry. The continuance of high prices for feeder and slaughter lambs and the higher cost of production have been among the factors contributing towards the decline in numbers.

The number of sheep and lambs on farms in Canada on December 1, 1949 were estimated at 1,235,000 head, almost 7 percent below those of the preceding year. Numbers have declined steadily for 5 years and are now less than one half of the 1936-40 average. Some 84,000 head of sheep in Newfoundland have not been incorporated into the Canadian statistics following the Union with Canada.

Economic returns from the sheep industry apparently are less attractive than those from grain and livestock farming. Also, predatory animals have caused heavy losses in certain areas. Some effort is being put forth to improve the quality of mutton and lamb by importing breeds from the United Kingdom for cross-breeding purposes. It is believed that this will help stimulate the production of better market lambs.

In Mexico, sheep numbers at the end of 1949 had declined slightly from the 5.1 million head of a year earlier. Current estimated numbers of around 5 million head exceed the 1936-40 level. The decline in numbers appears to have occurred as a result of slaughter, in connection with the foot-and-mouth disease, and the reduction of flocks for lack of pasture and water.

Europe

Sheep and lamb numbers in the United Kingdom, according to the June 1949 data, increased by approximately 7 percent, but were 25 percent below the 1936-40 average. During the war period, the sheep industry was set back considerably due to grasslands having been ploughed up and also by the very severe winter of 1946-47. Delay in converting crop lands back to grasslands has further curtailed recovery of the sheep industry. The numbers of breeding ewes in September 1949 were somewhat larger than those of the preceding September, while the largest increase occurred in the class under 1 year old. Mild weather during this year's lambing season would assure a good lamb crop and relatively few losses.

Spain, the largest sheep producing country in Europe, is believed to have held its numbers at around 22 million head in spite of the drought conditions. Numbers in 1948 and 1949 were above the 1936-40 average. Pastures are reported as excellent and animals in good condition. The situation generally is better than a year ago and the effect on numbers will be determined by the amount of rainfall and weather conditions during the year. Adverse weather conditions in Portugal are believed to have held sheep numbers slightly below those of 1948 and 1949 and they are now probably very close to the 1936-40 average. Mutton and lamb production during 1949 continued to be slightly below that of 1948, indicating that sheep numbers may have been less affected by the drought than other livestock.

Italian sheep numbers reached a postwar peak in 1949 when they surpassed prewar numbers by 7 percent. The poor condition of pastures in 1949, the present land reclamation and the land reform programs will limit sheep raising and therefore some decline in numbers can be anticipated in 1950. Sheep numbers in France continued upward through 1948, but a decline in 1949 has put numbers back to 74 percent of prewar. However, ewe numbers are 77 percent and lambs 83 percent of prewar levels. Mutton prices are favorable to the producers, which may tend to hold numbers at present levels or even increase numbers.

Rumania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia, the principal sheep producing countries in southeastern Europe, are believed to have increased their numbers somewhat over the preceding year. Numbers in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia are believed to have exceeded the prewar level, while Rumania is below. A generally favorable crop and pasture situation in these countries during 1949 would tend to support the probable increase in sheep numbers. Recovery of sheep numbers, in most instances, has been slower than cattle and hogs. The emphasis, like that of western Europe, has been to increase hog and cattle numbers.

In Greece, sheep numbers show only a small increase over December 1948, and continue to be about 20 percent below the 1936-40 level. With pasture conditions improved and some decline in sheep and lamb slaughter, the upward trend can be expected to continue in 1950.

Pastoral conditions in the Soviet Union during 1949 apparently were favorable to sheep production since numbers increased considerably and now exceed the 1936-40 level. This increase, however, is due to normal increases and to outside acquisitions. Sheep numbers in the war-devastated areas of the western and central part of the Union are now believed to have been restored to their prewar level, while numbers in the eastern part of the Soviet Union, not included in war areas, have remained relatively normal and perhaps not seriously damaged by the war.

Asia

In Asia, India, Turkey, China, Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan are the principal sheep raising countries and their numbers represent about 80 percent of the sheep on the continent. Estimated numbers for India and Pakistan, at the beginning of this year were slightly larger than those for last year, but around 5 percent below the 1936-40 average. However, the increases in these two countries were more than offset by decreases in Turkey, Iran and Iraq. Iranian numbers at the present time are estimated to be about 25 percent below the 1936-40 prewar level. Numbers in Iraq and Turkey are 27 and 11 percent, respectively, above prewar, while China is about 20 percent below. Numbers in Syria declined considerably during 1949, but are almost 20 percent above the 1936-40 average.

Africa

On the African continent sheep numbers in early 1950 are estimated to be slightly higher than a year earlier but still below the average for the 1936-40 period. Numbers in the Union of South Africa constitute more than one third of the sheep on the continent. Sheep numbers in the eastern Cape Province of the Union received a set-back due to the drought during the year. It is assumed that the relatively high prices for wool will encourage holding back sheep for wool and breeding purposes. Sheep slaughter, also, is expected to be at a low level in 1950. Increases in Algeria, French Morocco, and Tunisia greatly exceeded the declines that occurred in the Union of South Africa, Southwest Africa and some minor areas.

South America

Argentine sheep numbers in 1949 continue the downward trend which began in 1945. Further decreases are expected as a result of the 1949 drought. Numbers in many areas, otherwise, are believed to have stabilized somewhat in 1949 following the severe liquidations in 1947 and 1948 caused by increased costs of production and shortage of labor. At that time there was considerable shifting from sheep to cattle raising. Although no significant increase in sheep numbers is expected in the near future, numbers in the southern zones are relatively stable due to strong wool quotations, and forecasts are for good lambings in Patagonia.

In Uruguay, sheep numbers were estimated at 25 million head in May of 1949, but a sizeable decline is anticipated in 1950. The 1949 numbers are the highest ever officially recorded. The high price of wool was the principal factor contributing to the high level of sheep numbers. As a result, the ranchers have held on to old ewes and wethers as long as they can produce wool. Because of the beginning of a new drought and overstocking of sheep, further decline in numbers can be expected.

Sheep numbers in Brazil are holding their relatively high postwar level, which is approximately 40 percent above the 1936-40 level. Peruvian sheep numbers continue relatively unchanged, although postwar numbers are around 15 percent above the prewar level. In Chile, sheep numbers continue somewhat above the 1936-40 average and near their peak level.

Oceania

Australian sheep numbers in 1949 increased in all states except Queensland, where a decrease of 2 percent occurred. The over-all increase for the country was 6 percent. However, current numbers are believed to be near the 1936-40 average. Above average pasture conditions during the year, coupled with unprecedented high prices for wool, have provided the necessary incentive for expanding flocks. A substantial increase in numbers is anticipated when the March 1950 data become available.

In New Zealand, sheep numbers continue the upward trend and are about 5 percent above the average for the 1936-40 period. Further increase is anticipated in 1950 because of the largest number of breeding ewes ever reported and the high percentage of lambing.

This is one of a series of regularly scheduled reports on world agricultural production approved by the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations Committee on Foreign Crop and Livestock Statistics. For this report, the Committee was composed of C. M. Purves, Acting Chairman, Elmer A. Reese, Eugene T. Ransom, Mary E. Long and Glenn A. Ruggles.

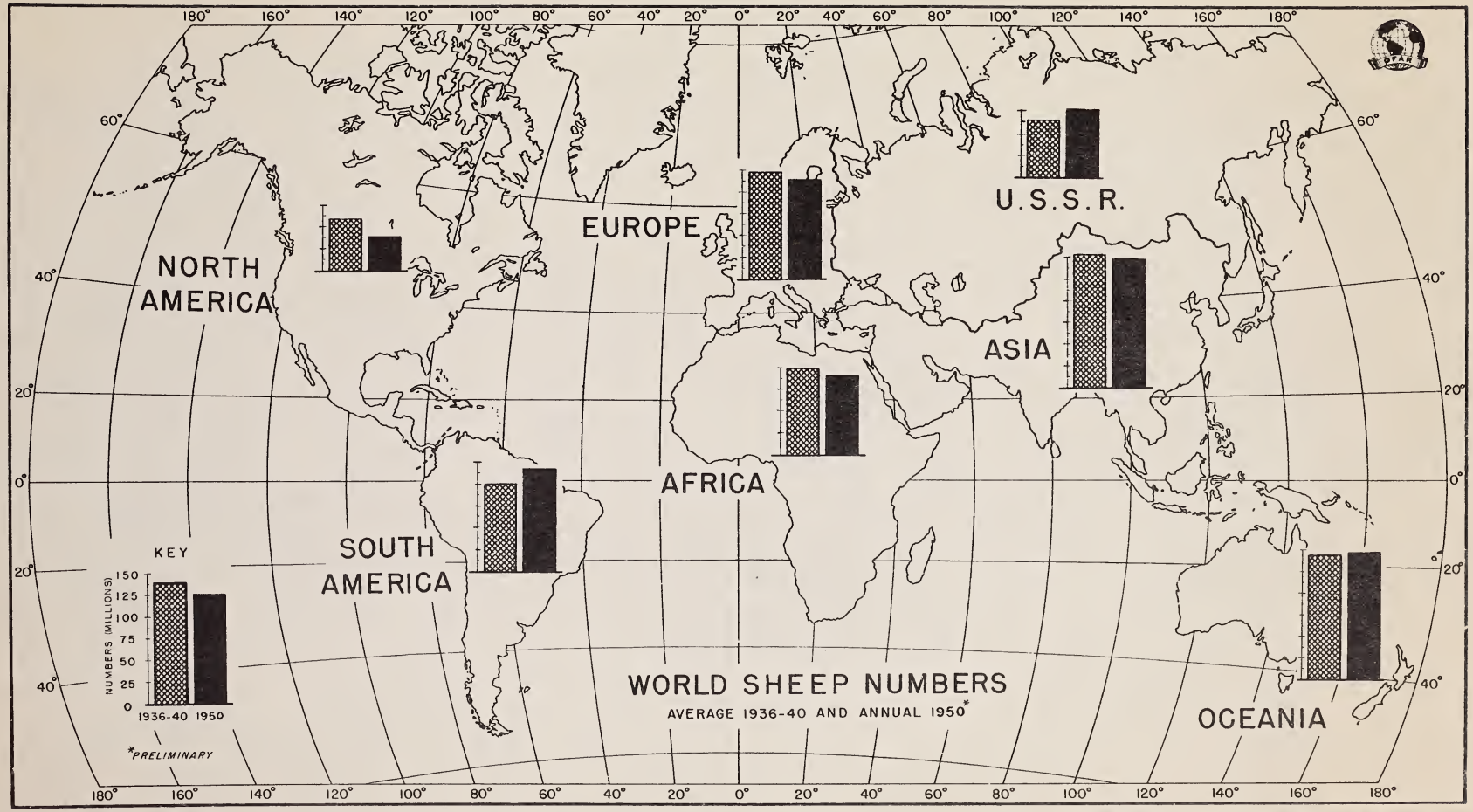
SHEEP: Number in specified countries, averages 1936-40 and 1941-45, annual 1945-1950

Continent and country	Month of estimate 1/	Average 1936-40	Average 1941-45	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949 2/	1950 2/
		Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands
NORTH AMERICA									
Canada	Dec. 1 1/	2,651	2,710	2,822	2,456	1,782	1,587	1,322	1,235
Guatemala	July	273 3/	406	-	-	- 1/	618	-	-
Mexico	Dec. 31 1/	4/5/4,809 3/	4,632	-	-	-	-	5,100	5,000
United States	Jan. 1	51,404	52,517	46,520	42,436	37,818	34,827	31,654	30,797
Estimated total		59,700	60,800	55,600	51,300	46,100	42,800	39,200	38,200
EUROPE									
Albania	3/	1,576	-	1,670	1,700	-	-	-	-
Austria	Dec. 31 1/ 3/	316	400	460	391	399	474	454	375
Belgium	Jan. 1 4/	187	193	199	177	144	107	155	121
Bulgaria	Dec. 31 1/	8,746	8,782	7,100	7,800	8,784	-	-	-
Czechoslovakia	Jan. 1 3/	492	511	560	510	491	386	459	480
Denmark	July 15 4/	147 3/	198	213	170	91	77	67	-
Eire	June	3,076	2,681	2,581	2,423	2,094	2,058	2,182	-
Finland	Mar. 1 6/	1,007	833	1,015	1,099	982	999	1,067	-
France 7/	Fall 1/	9,648	7,162	6,300	6,632	7,259	7,406	7,510	7,355
Germany 8/	Dec. 1 1/ 3/	3,729	4,050	-	3,010	3,000	3,040	3,220	2,760
Greece	Dec. 31 1/ 3/	8,304	-	-	6,262	7,205	7,056	6,631	6,656
Hungary	Spring	1,490	1,207 7/	328 7/	370 7/	488 7/	590	650	-
Iceland	Spring	624	595	532	511	- 1/	505 1/	470	-
Italy	July 4/	9,350	8,400	-	8,600	8,800	9,190	10,100	-
Netherlands	May	636	496	489	558	460	425	464	-
Norway	June	1,742	1,715	1,760	1,707	1,698	1,629	1,808	-
Poland	June 30 4/	1,941	- 7/	710 7/	759 7/	983	1,406	-	-
Portugal	Dec. 31 1/ 9/	3,948	3,800	3,500	3,900	4,000	4,000	-	-
Rumania	Dec. 31 1/ 3/	10,176	-	-	6,799	7,100	-	-	-
Spain	Dec. 31 1/ 4/	20,000 3/	23,509	22,000	20,183	-	-	22,000	-
Sweden	Summer	398	486	516	482	421	349	313	-
Switzerland	April 3/	177	200	192	195	182	170	-	-
United Kingdom	June	26,112	20,881	20,150	20,358	16,713	18,164	19,493	-
Yugoslavia	Dec. 31 1/	9,796	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Estimated total		123,800	113,100	101,000	101,700	102,200	106,200	111,200	112,500
U.S.S.R. (Europe and Asia)	Jan. 1 4/	66,000	-	-	61,100	60,800	64,800	74,000	78,000
ASIA									
Cyprus 10/	March	300	303	331	315	313	291	-	304
Iran	March 21	14,497	13,854	13,020	12,950	13,190	13,200	11,100	10,900
Iraq	Jan. 1 3/	7,090 3/	6,719	7,250	8,000	-	-	9,100	9,000
Syria	Dec. 31 1/ 3/	2,060	2,539	2,777	3,091	3,260	3,176	2,935	2,443
Trans-Jordan		216	293	296	-	-	-	-	-
Turkey	Dec. 31 1/	21,656	23,641	22,450	23,386	23,528	24,496	25,500	24,000
China 11/	May	26,000	22,000	21,000	20,000	22,000	-	-	-
India	Jan. 1 4/	41,000 4/	38,000	38,000	-	-	-	-	39,000
Indonesia	Dec. 31 1/ 3/	1,614	-	-	-	1,610	-	-	1,740
Pakistan	Jan. 1 4/	8,000 4/	6,000	6,100	-	-	6,150	-	6,500
Estimated total		152,600	145,300	142,900	144,300	147,700	148,200	147,600	146,200

SOUTH AMERICA									
Argentina	July	3/ 44,900	3/ 52,288	56,182	55,000	12/ 54,000	53,500	48,000	-
Bolivia	Dec. 31 1/	4/ 2,608	3/ 3,987	4,014	-	4,289	4,534	4,195	-
Brazil		3/ 11,438	11,346	13,283	15,542	16,000	16,000	-	-
Chile	June	3/ 5,855	3/ 6,057	6,000	5,900	6,000	6,328	6,300	-
Colombia	Dec. 31 1/	916	1,240	-	1,168	-	1,013	1,061	1,200
Ecuador		-	3/ 1,400	1,443	-	-	1,802	-	-
Paraguay	Dec. 31 1/	3/ 159	3/ 203	210	255	-	-	252	202
Peru		4/ 14,900	16,200	-	17,288	-	1/ 17,288	-	-
Uruguay	May	4/ 17,931	4/ 20,289	-	19,559	-	22,000	25,000	-
Estimated total		100,900	113,700	120,100	121,100	122,300	123,500	120,600	115,400
AFRICA									
Algeria 10/	Nov. 1 1/	6,180	6,071	5,832	5,376	-	3,145	3,105	5,000
Anglo-Egyptian Sudan		3/ 2,500	-	-	-	4,800	-	-	-
Kenya		3/ 3,274	3/ 3,148	3,075	3,160	3,232	3,300	-	-
Tanganyika	Dec. 31 1/	1,780	2,001	2,019	2,216	2,366	2,316	-	-
Uganda	Mar. 31	1,285	1,007	995	-	1,008	1,037	-	-
Basutoland		1,443	4/ 1,545	1,545	-	1,703	-	-	-
Egypt	June	3/ 1,771	3/ 1,350	1,385	-	-	1,400	1,200	-
French Morocco 10/	Dec. 31 1/	9,976	12,172	10,860	8,620	6,031	7,423	8,474	9,500
French West Africa and Togo		3/ 8,674	8,260	8,570	-	-	9,100	-	-
Madagascar 10/	Dec. 31 1/	193	202	174	161	156	158	177	204
Mozambique	Dec. 31 1/	84	67	62	56	58	65	64	-
Northern Rhodesia	Dec. 31 1/	36	29	35	34	35	38	36	-
Southern Rhodesia	Dec. 31 1/	310	305	334	330	325	286	302	-
South West Africa		3/ 2,972	4/ 3,534	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spanish Morocco 10/		481	577	596	443	574	600	-	-
Tunisia 10/	Dec. 31 1/	3,026	3,250	3,324	2,976	1,788	1,752	1,587	1,894
Union of South Africa	August	39,899	4/ 37,888	-	30,832	30,723	32,612	-	-
Estimated total		100,000	101,400	96,400	91,500	86,100	90,000	89,600	91,800
OCEANIA									
Australia	Mar. 31	1/ 112,571	120,209	105,371	96,396	95,723	102,559	108,728	115,000
New Zealand	Apr. 30	31,352	3/ 32,976	33,975	33,000	32,682	32,483	32,845	33,000
Estimated total		144,000	153,200	139,400	129,400	128,400	135,100	141,600	148,000
Estimated world total		747,000	754,500	715,400	700,400	693,600	710,600	723,800	730,100

1/ End of year estimates (October to December) included under following year for comparisons and totals. Thus, for Canada the December 1, 1944 estimate of 2,822,000 head is shown under 1945. 2/ Preliminary. 3/ Average for 2 to 4 years only. 4/ Census or estimate for single year. 5/ June. 6/ March. 7/ Official statistics; may be underestimates of actual numbers. 8/ Totals for Western Germany and Soviet Zone. 9/ Census, December 31, 1940. 10/ Data include only number taxed. 11/ Includes China Proper (22 provinces), Manchuria, Jehol and Sinkiang (Turkestan). 12/ The census of May 10-12, 1947, reported 50,857,000 sheep on farms.

Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations. Prepared or estimated on the basis of official statistics of foreign governments, reports of United States foreign service officers, and other information. Data for countries having changed boundaries relate to present territory, unless otherwise noted. Totals include estimates for countries for which official statistics are unavailable.



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